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29 December 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Harry Rowen, C/NIC

FROM : Hal Ford, NIO/AL

SUBJECT : NIO Views (a year ago) on Prospects for 1982

ATTACHMENT : The January 1982 package

Some brief thoughts on the (January 1982) Prospects and on how well they have held up. I appreciate the great advantages -- and dangers -- in looking backward, and will temper my judgments with appropriate restraint. They concern, first, matters of presentation, and then of substance.

A. Matters of Presentation

1. Substance aside, in future such exercises we should give more attention to matters of presentation and purpose. Can we assume the DCI will give these Prospects close attention? Do they deserve his close attention? If so, what particular purposes should they serve? Should their formats and presumed purposes all be similar? Or should each set be constructed as the individual NIO wishes?

2. The latter certainly applied in January 1982. The sets varied greatly. Some were short essays, paragraph style; others, bullet style. Some made only very general judgments, others quite specific. Almost all reflected generally accepted community or CIA views; one was highly idiosyncratic. Some were directly sensitive to policy relevance and to the US ingredients present in the particular world questions; other presentations were much less so.

3. Recommendations concerning presentation:

a. To be read and absorbed, such Prospects should avoid undifferentiated presentation in paragraph style -- where nothing stands out, and where the (DCI) reader really has to work in order to divine the NIO's message.

b. Instead, major points should be highlighted in bullet or very brief style -- so that principal points stand out.

c. Avoid the obvious and the general: "there will be instability..."

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d. Where appropriate, employ both generally agreed and individual NIO judgments/estimates -- but be sure to make clear which is which.

e. NIOs should avoid pushing their own hangups at the expense of other pressing substantive problems which should be addressed.

f. Wherever possible, tie to specific US policy concerns. For an excellent example, see [] (attached) presentation (of 13 January 1982).

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B. Matters of Substance

4. The picture given of the anticipated world scene has been validated -- though in very general terms. As might be expected the military items (SP & GPF) seem to have marched along rather well; the softer subjects less so.

5. A large number of specific (softer) items were nonetheless called fairly well: e.g., Pakistani nuclear weapons, soft oil market, Israel's West Bank, Qadhafi, Iran-Iraq war, horn of Africa, US-WE relations, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Egypt, the Arabian peninsula.

6. But a number of fairly important developments were missed. Some may have been unknowables; others perhaps could have been called. Principal examples of errors or omissions:

a. No bugle call about LDC debt distress and the looming very disruptive impact on the international financial structure.

b. In these respects, no clue about Mexico. (But lots of concerns about leftist influence in Mexico and Central America.)

c. We were told to expect just more of the same from the Soviets, with no clues about the possible policy consequences of Soviet succession, or new Soviet initiatives.

d. The USSR's total situation was painted as more rickety than has proved to be the case.

e. Central America was described as going to hell in a handbasket: e.g., "...by the end of 1982 Honduras will probably be neutral at best and perhaps on the way to Lebanonization..."; re El Salvador, "There is more than a 60% chance for an extreme left victory this year or early 1983..."

f. No mention of the possibility of an Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

g. Ditto Argentina and the Falklands.

h. No alert that the PRC might distance itself from the US and begin to flirt with the USSR.

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i. No alert that Japanese-US relations might become as difficult as has occurred.

j. Some shots from the hip:

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-- "North Yemen represents a Soviet breakthrough in political-paramilitary warfare..." (Not NIO/NESA).

-- "My sense is that Moscow will use any and all military means to crush the Afghan resistance in 1982..." (Not NIO/NESA).

4. Recommendations

- In the preparing of Prospects, NIOs should be particularly sensitive to the US as an actor in and influence on the foreign scenes being estimates. This is of course particularly applicable to international financial questions, world economic developments, and prospects in those areas of the world where the US is heavily committed.
- Include more possible contingencies -- through clearly label as such.
- Identify and explain any areas where there may be substantial differences of estimative judgment.
- Perhaps include some thoughts about those areas where intelligence support can reasonably be expected to improve during the year, or not to improve.



Hal Ford

Attachment: As Stated

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